/68 cont./

are free persons, has his own moral conduct. And even though among the Indians there does not exist the great discrimination and complexity as among us, neither can we fall into the utopia of believing them identical to the point of repeating the saying that "their faces and their characters are like grains of rice."

Having made this reservation, we shall say that shame and modesty are words which form a part of the linguistic fund of these Indians and, consequently, the ideas of their moral fund. We speak of modesty in physiological actions and in the modest parts of the body; and of shame for immoral actions in the broadest sense of this word.

147. To say that clothing engenders modesty and not vice versa and to suppose that customs (mores) create the concept of morality and not the reverse is to invert the concepts provided by history and by intimate personal experience.

It is true that clothes produce a certain kind of accidental modesty; and thus, verbi gracia, those of us who use long robes or long trousers would be embarrassed to walk around with trousers up to the knee or a tunic that only comes halfway down the leg. But there is a minimum of /69/ clothing required by the minimum of natural modesty, whether they be the mythical fig leaves, the classic grape leaves, or the native loincloths made of glass beads, palm leaves, the neck of a gourd, or a /piece of/ tree bark /concha de arboles/. Thus it is that not even among the Pemón nor even among other even poorer and more isolated tribes, such as the Sapé, Arutaní, Sirianá, and Motilón, have we ever found an Indian in puris naturalibus, or a naked Indian. By means of trade with neighboring tribes or by their own industry they all manage not to be without at least a humble guayuco, loincloths, a covering of foliage, or whatever it might be called.

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proboque, deteriora sequor," is a truth from the days in the Garden of Eden up to the present. And this is because from the desire to the deed, from the word to the act, there is a great gap. "It is necessary to confess that, even when we know what is good, we do not follow it, some out of laziness and others because we postpone virtue in favor of pleasure," many centuries ago the Latin poet, the Greek Euripedes, wrote.

151. We recognize, thus, the deficiencies of the Indians in the practice of good, but we affirm roundly their knowledge of morality. This would be a good occasion to repeat what was said by Msgr. Le Roy and previously referred to, but I am going to copy, rather, what Father Topinard says in his /Antropologia /Anthropology/, so that no one will think that we are talking just for the sake of talking or beating the air.

"Man," says the French writer, "is in no way distinct from animals as regards family: he is monogamous or polygamous and woman polyandrous like them.... Man unites, as they do, without scruple with his own relatives or relatives by marriage.... The father is the master of the life of his children, practices infanticide at will, without having to be circumspect, just as the son later gets rid of his old and infirm parents, who are a burden to him." This is what is called reciting by heart, not to say without understanding.

577 Much to the contrary, lying, stealing, disobeying parents on the part of minors, simple adultery (not to mention incest), simple homicide (not to mention parricide and infanticide), etc., seem to be firmly condemned in the daily life and the oral literature of the Indians.

575 152. Let us speak in particular of polygamy. With regard to this question not long ago an unperceptive journalist wrote that we missionaries had managed to clothe the Indians, but that we had not managed to clothe them in our Christian morality. With statistics in hand we can prove that polygamy, in spite of not being clearly reproved in the natives' moral code and in spite of having been quite widely practiced in

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Chapter XVIII

Are the Indians Grateful or Ungrateful?

154. A universal complaint. 155. Beggary. 156. Ingratitude through ignorance. 157. The legend of Makunaimá and of the Government. 158. There are no gifts among Indians. 159. Practical advice. 160. Pleasant memories.

154. One of the proverbs most widely spread against the Indians is the one which is contained like gall in its bladder in the thousand times repeated quatrain:

The Indian flees from work
And looks for idleness:
Where they beat him up, he stays,
Where they pay him, he goes away.

431 This matter of ingratitude is more than a common, universal complaint of all against all others. And the fact is that since "gratitude is an interminable debt," -- (for which reason it is very correctly said that money is worth more than favors), many make excessive use of their gifts, by always and endlessly asking for the loan of services. As a result of which there exists that other little verse:

"Give him always, don't give him one;
You haven't given him anything," /72/

which is a two-edged blade, which cuts equally ingrates and the excessively demanding.

155. Another very similar thing and one which many confuse with ingratitude is excessive asking for favors, from which doubtless missionaries and Indians suffer. However, I myself, who a great many times have suffered the bother of this defect (?) of the Indians through not being able to remedy

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172 cont.
431 it with gifts, serenely ask: What other thing can and must we
577 poor people do but beg? What should dry earth do but sit up
[123] and open its mouth in demand for water?

Nor will anyone deny that splendid and generous people
571 are rare; and in the face of this undeniable fact of miserliness, there is no other remedy than to be beggarly. "A stubborn poor person extracts a crumb of bread." For this reason also the natives often endure punishment and maltreatment, which they did not go looking for (where they beat them they remain) and they go away when they have received their pay, because this is precisely what they came looking for and what they have been working for. And we would be presumptuous in the extreme if, because we pay the Indians, we should want to keep them indefinitely at our side and in our service.

600 156. Wisely did Father Eulogio warn that "the uncivilized Indian does not show gratitude in any way," and this is due to ignorance of our ways of life, our industries, and our business ways.

829 Another missionary, Father Baltasar de Matallana, also
171 says that such Indians "believe that shotguns loaded with shot and powder rained down from heaven on us." Another humorist, an explorer of mines in all the Guianas, assured me that the natives imagined that we were born with money in our pockets, just as they were born with lice in their hair and fleas on their feet.

829 And that is why it turned out to be unproductive, when we
123 brought Indians to Caracas, to take them to the shops and warehouses, since they couldn't understand why, out of so many pieces of cloth, so many ready-made clothes exposed to their avid glances, so many dozens of suitcases, axes, and other tools, not a single meter was ever cut off for them, that nobody ever gave them a garment, nor let them take away what, apparently, was more than enough for the others.

538 157. The old Indians also have the legendary belief that
829 their ancient predecessors, the Makunaimá, extremely able,

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868 162. Practical teaching. My dear interlocutor can well understand that the Indians, without setting up a pedagogical chair and a group of educators, do educate and teach their children practically. Their children, in turn, through the natural instinct for imitation, tend to copy what they see in their parents.

857 And, as we imagined, male children practice the handling of their miniature bows and accompany their elders on hunts, and show the aggressiveness and bravery appropriate to their sex, even though it may only be "killing" little pieces of sticks or stones in little improvised hammocks, making little clay cakes like cassava cakes, etc.

867 163. Oral teaching. The other teaching, oral and intentional, is very much rarer than among us; however, I have
577 gathered in this regard some data of the old people who, obliged
538 more than they may wish to lead a sedentary life, give their advice to the young people. In the tales which, as has often been said, form the native oral literature, the defects of gluttony, lack of personal cleanliness, carelessness in the face of what is strange and unknown, conjugal infidelity and other sexual vices, lack of love for children, etc., are all ridiculed.

538 It is clear, however, that their morality does not attain
577 the perfection of the Gospel and that frequently in the earliest
864 legendary narrations the spirit of revenge and the refinement of torture of victims is taught; there also occur in these stories sexual scenes which are extremely crude, without their taking any care about telling them in the presence of little children, who acquire a very precocious knowledge and perhaps even a very premature initiation. In this particular they evidently have a rather blunted feeling of morality.

776 164. The bogeyman. In childhood, recourse is frequently
861 taken to the deceit of the enek ("bug" or "funny little fellow"), which is our coco /"bogeyman"/, so that the children will not go far away, so that they will not cry, so that they will obey, etc. They use, thus, the stimulus of fear. Among other threats

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776 a) The Pemón do not have an autochthonous idea of a God Creator and Savior of each of his creatures, nor particularly of man. I believe very apt Joubert's statement: "Seeking words, ideas are found," and from it I deduce that, since the Pemón lack any word of their own to say "God," they also lack this concept. And I do remember with no little laughter that the "pra man, there is none," with which /96/ they answered someone who was interrogating them about this, was interpreted as the equivalent of "Brahma."

771 b) Their moral code, although it is known, is not made
● 577 dependent upon a supreme will, nor is it thought that moral actions might have the sanction of a reward or a positive punishment, external and not inherent to the action itself either in this life or in another one, although this life is clearly admitted with regard to its existence but very confusedly regarding its form and manner.

Those who state flatly that "there neither exists dogma without morality, nor morality without dogma," should explain this anomaly. I believe simply that they ought not to exist logically; but from this it cannot be deduced that they do not exist in fact.

782 c) No acts of worship are known of: neither of love and adoration, nor of sacrifice and placation. Neither are images or idols seen, nor anything, in general, of what makes up the external demonstrations of respect to God and his saints.

208. And in lieu of these three essential elements, they have the following:

776 a) A belief that each one of the species of animate and inanimate beings, which exists in the world, has its progenitor or its own primogenital ancestor, endowed with specific qualities, from whom individuals derive their faculties, of whom he is the protector and avenger in a purely physical order. These are the imá, the piá, said in generic form, and the potorí and the pachí, according to whether these ancestors or genealogical trees are considered masculine or feminine.